"FARMERS, LEARN TO COOPERATE," SAYS SETH LOW

Shows His Neighbors in Westchester County How Science and Good Business Methods Can Make Agriculture Profitable

New York's Ex-Mayor Is Now a Practical Farmer at Broad Brook—He Wants All Commission Men Licensed

EVERYBODY knows Seth Low as the former Mayor of New York, and Brooklynites know that he was twice Mayor of Brooklyn when it was a city. But it is not by any means so widely known that Mr. Low is now a farmer, and beyond all else a practical farmer. True, a shrewd guesser might divine the truth by merely looking at him, for he is ruddy and sturdy, somewhat suggestive of John Bull at his best. He seems to be and is physically fit, a result no doubt due to outdoor life.

To become a farmer was long one of Mr. Low's ambitions. His ancestors as owners of clipper ships in the China and India trade for many years ploughed the ocean, so why should not he plough the land? But his life was so engrossed with urban affairs that until the end of his New York Mayoralty term he never had time to indulge his rural taste.

Then in 1906 in Bedford Hills, N. Y., near the New England line, he purchased two farms having a total of 190 acres. The land was not smooth and level by any means. It was very hilly, it contained thirty-seven acres of swamp, and the great glacier which happened along that way about a million years ago—the precise date unfortunately is unrecorded—left its visiting cards in the form of great numbers of boulders composed of about every variety of rock to be found between Bedford Hills and northern Labrador.

The farming custom of the vicinity in dealing with swamps was to let them severely alone. As to the boulders, they were ploughed around. Mr. Low considered the situation and thought that he could better the common practice.

He took counsel in regard to the swamp. Which was the better means of draining it, open drains or sunken tile pipes? The first cost of the open drains would be less than that of the pipes, but the open drains would require labor each year to keep them free from accumulations of sand. Also they would waste about an acre of space. Tile drainage was decided upon and the swamp was drained and planted with corn. It is doing well, and in a few years it will be raising good hay.

As to the boulders, Mr. Low thanked the glacier politely and proceeded to utilize them. He broke them up and built house, barn, garage and a mile of road out of them and also sold $10,500 worth of them to neighbors. The cost of clearing the land was $30 an acre, which included payment for Mr. Low's teams, charged at $5 a day. The hills are conquered by means of the side hill plough drawn by horses.

It is a dairy farm with a herd of sixty milch cows. These are not fancy but graded cattle such as any farmer may have. There are also calves and pigs and there are new orchards of peach and apple trees. There are 2,200 chickens, white Leghorns, and they yield at this season 1,200 eggs a day.

On January 13 of the present year Mr. Low, addressing a meeting of the State Agricultural Society at Albany on the subject of "Cooperation," said:

"When my present superintendent, G. D. Brill, a native of Dutchess county and a graduate of the four year agricultural course at Cornell University, came to me five years ago he said to me: 'Mr. Low, it will take five years to place this farm upon its feet.' When I closed my books at the end of October, 1912, the farm had become entirely self-supporting, by which I mean that it had earned enough in cash to meet all charges, including the salary of the superintendent and of the bookkeeper, and to pay on account of my taxes, insurance and painting at the rate of $360 a year.

"The farm also pays one-half of the maintenance cost of my electric light and power plant and of my water system. The indications are that at the end of the current farm year which with me begins on November 1, the farm will have begun to pay something on the interest account. I believe that it can be made to earn 5 per cent. over and above all charges of every kind on a valuation of $80,000. I am not sure that we shall not learn how to make it pay even more."

Northern Westchester county, where Broad Brook Farm lies, is in a transitional stage. About one-half of the land has been sold to city dwellers for summer homes. The other half of the land is still in the ownership of farmers whose methods are generally slack and half hearted, so that production has fallen off. In 1880 there were 3,000 farms in Westchester county supporting the families occupying them and yielding a large surplus. The total population of the county then was 143,000. In 1910 the county contained 283,000 inhabitants, but the number of farms had shrunk to 2,000 and the quality of farming had deteriorated.

Demand for farm products increased greatly in Westchester county between 1880 and 1910, but in spite of this better market production languished. This is explained on the theory that land in Westchester county has increased so much in value that it pays the farmers better to sell than to cultivate their holdings. Says Mr. Low:

"This generalization is true only in part; for every farmer is not able to sell his land, and until he does sell it he ought to be able to use it profitably. Perhaps he does in one way or another, for I am always impressed by the well to do appearance of the farmhouses in all parts of northern Westchester through which I drive. The productivity of the farms, on the other hand, speaking by and large, is very small, and under proper conditions it ought to be very large. It is intolerable to believe that the mere neighborhood of New York city can take 346 square miles of land out of the productive area of the State.

"This is the problem that has been borne in upon me since I have been farming in Westchester county. I have repeatedly asked myself the questions: Why is it that agricultural land, so near to a great population, is not profitably cultivated; and why is it that this population is fed from Virginia instead of being fed by the farmers at its doors? The answer to these questions, in my judgment, is twofold.

"First, the ordinary Westchester county farmer, like most of the farmers throughout the East, buys at retail and sells at wholesale. The second reason is that under modern conditions the wholesale market is open to the farmer only upon terms which place him wholly at the mercy of commission men. I suspect that these answers explain the difficulty of profitable farming in many parts of the State of New York as well as in Westchester county. Both of these conditions can be changed, the first by cooperation, the second by licensing commission men.

"Let me pause here long enough to say that, in my observation, the ordinary farmer has much to learn before he can succeed even with such improvement as is possible in the conditions to which I have referred. The late Dr. Knapp of the United States Agricultural Department used to say that 'farming is one part science, three parts art and four parts business.' The ordinary farmer would do well to increase his knowledge of the science of farming, to say nothing of the art. On the side of business management he needs help if he is to succeed, for to succeed in farming it is not enough to produce. One must be able both to produce economically and to sell advantageously.

"It is precisely here that cooperation is so important for the farmer, for cooperation ought to do for the small farmer precisely what he cannot do for himself. It ought to give him expert information as to the best crops to raise and how to raise them; it ought to enable him to buy what he needs more cheaply and to sell what he produces to better advantage; it ought to be able to help him to keep accounts so that he can detect waste and learn how to improve his methods. In a word it ought to do for him just what he cannot do well for himself.

"It is hard for us in the East, where the farmers are not used to cooperation, to learn how to cooperate, for we come of an ancestry whose great merit it was that each one of them could stand upon his own feet. But if the Eastern farmer is again to prosper we must all of us learn to cooperate with each other. It may be said, without fear of successful contradiction, that through well managed cooperation the small farmer can get his supplies at least as cheaply as the farmer with large capital. Is not this worth while?

"One other thing my experience in farming in Westchester county has taught me. I put it in the words of one of my neighbors who has been growing apples for a number of years:

"He says that he has made shipments of apples every now and then to commission merchants in New York. Almost invariably the first shipment has done well, and the second shipment very poorly. He says that he never has been able to find how the great city of New York knew that his second shipment was not a first shipment! Now, he says, he never makes more than one shipment to any commission merchant, and he begins with A and goes through the list to Z.

"I am far from wishing to imply that there are no honest commission merchants; but every farmer in the State knows that there are some dishonest commission merchants; and we all know that, as things are now, we are practically, absolutely in the hands of the man to whom we consign. We are helpless if our shipment is reported out of condition or off in quality. This is a situation that ought not to continue.

"The State, in my judgment, should license all commission merchants who are authorized to deal in farm products; and the terms of this license should be such as to protect both the commission merchant and the farmer from misunderstanding and from fraud. I have no doubt that the commission merchant, on his side, would be able to bear eloquent testimony to dishonest packing and other unworthy practices on the part of some farmers. All farmers are not dishonest any more than all commission men are. What is wanted is a system which will protect the honest commission man and the honest farmer from the dishonest commission man and the dishonest farmer."

Mr. Low since becoming a farmer has revised some old opinions. Not long ago he declared that previously to his Broad Brook experience he believed that farms were carried on by hard working men. Now he knows that they are operated by philosophers. That the cows are stoics is proved by the inexorable regularity with which they stow fodder, the various tribes of bacteria, on examination, prove to be epicureans; the hired men are peripatetics; while Mr Low himself endeavors to be a philosopher of the grove. Mr. Low does not actually do any of the physical labor on the farm; he neither ploughs nor pitches hay nor feeds horses nor milks cows. His is the still harder work of providing the psychic propulsion which makes all move.

Broad Brook Farm is the only one in its neighborhood where customers may order precisely as much milk as they please—a quart a day, or five one day and ten the next and none at all the week after. The calves and pigs can use a great deal of skimmed milk in their business, which is that of growing. Most of the farm product is consumed in the neighborhood, but the large surplus of eggs goes to the New York commission houses.

In all respects Mr. Low's farm serves as a practical model for the Bedford Hills district, and local officials declare that its influence for good is widespread. Farmers for miles around drive in to see how things are done at Broad Brook, and when they depart they carry away with them many new ideas. After the last session of the Peace Commission Baron d'Estournelles de Constant was a visitor at Broad Brook. He went to the barn and watched proceedings there for half an hour. Then he reported to Mr. Low:

"I perceive how it is that this farm is so successful. Your men jump to their work. It is due to cooperation and organization."

The Broad Brook superintendent, as has been said, was born in Dutchess county. He grew up on a farm, but took the four years course at Cornell and three of his associates are Cornell graduates who have had abundant farm experience. So there is a college atmosphere at Broad Brook, and when Mr Low sits at table with his aids he feels himself very much at home and conversation is not necessarily confined to narrow bounds. Unlike most farms the working day there is only nine hours in length.

Mr. Low thinks that young Americans who have grown up on farms and shared in farm work and afterward gone through agricultural colleges make the best farm managers. The city boy who goes to Cornell agricultural college and learns the theory of farming is prone to imagine that he has all the knowledge there is. But that is not the case. It should be theory plus practice.

SETH LOW—SUCCESSFUL FARMER.

New York's Notorious Old Five Points and the New—Brutality in One, Cunning in the Other

"SON," said the gray mustached man, "take a look around and tell me how many corners, or points, you can count from here, leaving out the Times Building."

They were standing at Forty-second street and Broadway, THE SUN man who writes this and the man who some years ago passed his sixtieth birthday. THE SUN man counted.

"Five," he replied.

"Right. Now, I know this territory as I know my own back yard, but there was a time when I knew another territory with the same intimate familiarity. Does the number of points you have counted suggest anything to you?"

The number of points did suggest something, and THE SUN man gave it a name.

"Right again. The Five Points. Well, I was born in the old Sixth ward, and there was a time in my life when I knew the territory of the old Five Points as well as I know this section now. Step in here and have something to take the heat out of the atmosphere and I will tell you something."

The step was made.

"Now," said the elder man, when the seltzer lemonade, than which he never drinks anything stronger, was drawing well, "listen to me a minute or two.

"I want to show that there are many points of resemblance between the old Five Points and this new Five Points, which has come lately into so much unenviable notoriety. I do not want to knock my city, and what I say must not be considered a knock, but there are points of resemblance.

"The old Five Points was a factor in the evil life of this city some years before the beginning of the last century. The topography of the place has been changed now so that it bears no resemblance to what it was even in my young days. It was formed by the intersection of Mulberry, Orange, Worth, Cross and Little Water streets. Like this centre, it had not only five points but seven points, two of which were formed by the base of a triangle, just the same as two points are formed here by the triangle on which the Times Building stands.

"Mulberry street still retains its name, but Orange street has become Baxter street, Anthony was absorbed into Worth when the latter was cut through, Cross is now Mission street and Little Water street disappeared when the Five Points Mission was built on the site of the infamous Old Brewery.

"The old Five Points touched on the Collect, the pond on which Fitch tried out his first model of a steamboat. It was filled in later, of course, but even after that the name Cow's Bay given to the spot to which people used to drive cows to the Collect for water, was continued. You could form no conception of what this later Cow's Bay was.

"Right alongside of the old brewery ran an alley, not more than three feet wide. It was called Murderer's Alley, both because the people of that time and place rejoiced in bloody names, and because a score or more of murders had been committed in its narrow confines. Murderer's Alley led to Cow's Bay, which before my time had become a cul de sac, surrounded by tumble down houses, in which were committed crimes of the most sordid and violent character.

"The 'Bloody Sixth' our ward was called, mostly because of the Five Points and its wickedness. It was bounded by Broadway, Canal street, the Bowery, Chatham street and Park row and contained about eighty-six acres. The population was 22,478. A census made by the missionaries showed 6,423 men, 5,741 women, 5,278 boys and 5,036 girls.

"It contained 270 rum shops of the worst character, 1,503 of its people lived in cellars and 4,807 in garrets. On one lot 25 by 100 feet there were shanties sheltering 286 persons. The population was fearfully mixed, since there were 3,435 Irish families, 416 Italian families, 393 German families, 210 Russian, 167 American, 112 Polish, 73 English, 70 African, 39 French, 17 Spanish, 15 Chinese, 11 Swiss, 9 Dutch, 8 Portuguese, 8 Austrian and 3 Belgian. Quite a mixed population, eh? And they were packed in too. In one cellar room 15 feet square lived twenty-six persons.

"The men did not make a trade of criminality. They were just bums, toughs and loafers, the predecessors of the gangmen of to-day. Here was the home of the Plug Uglies and the Dead Rabbits, two of the roughest and most brutal gangs New York has ever known. The gun fighting gangs of the East Side to-day are gentle and refined compared with them. They punished with fists and clubs, not bullets.

"Now, son, there's a picture of what the old Five Points was. The place was known the world over, and was to New York what Seven Dials and Whitechapel were to London.

"How about this new Five Points? There are no gangs up here yet, but gang work and gunmen are easily available. Twice within the last twelve months men have been shot to death within a stone's throw of where we are sitting, but the gunmen have been brought here from other parts of the city; also the victims were not lured here for the purpose of robbery.

"It is interesting to note that the very thing that gave the death blow to the old Five Points made this section of the city possible—light.

"Tom Byrnes once said that the electric light was the greatest abolisher of crime ever conceived. Of course he had in mind the sordid crimes which flourish only in darkness and not the high grade crimes. Evil of the kind that prevailed in the old Five Points needs darkness and hiding places. There are other kinds of crimes which need light.

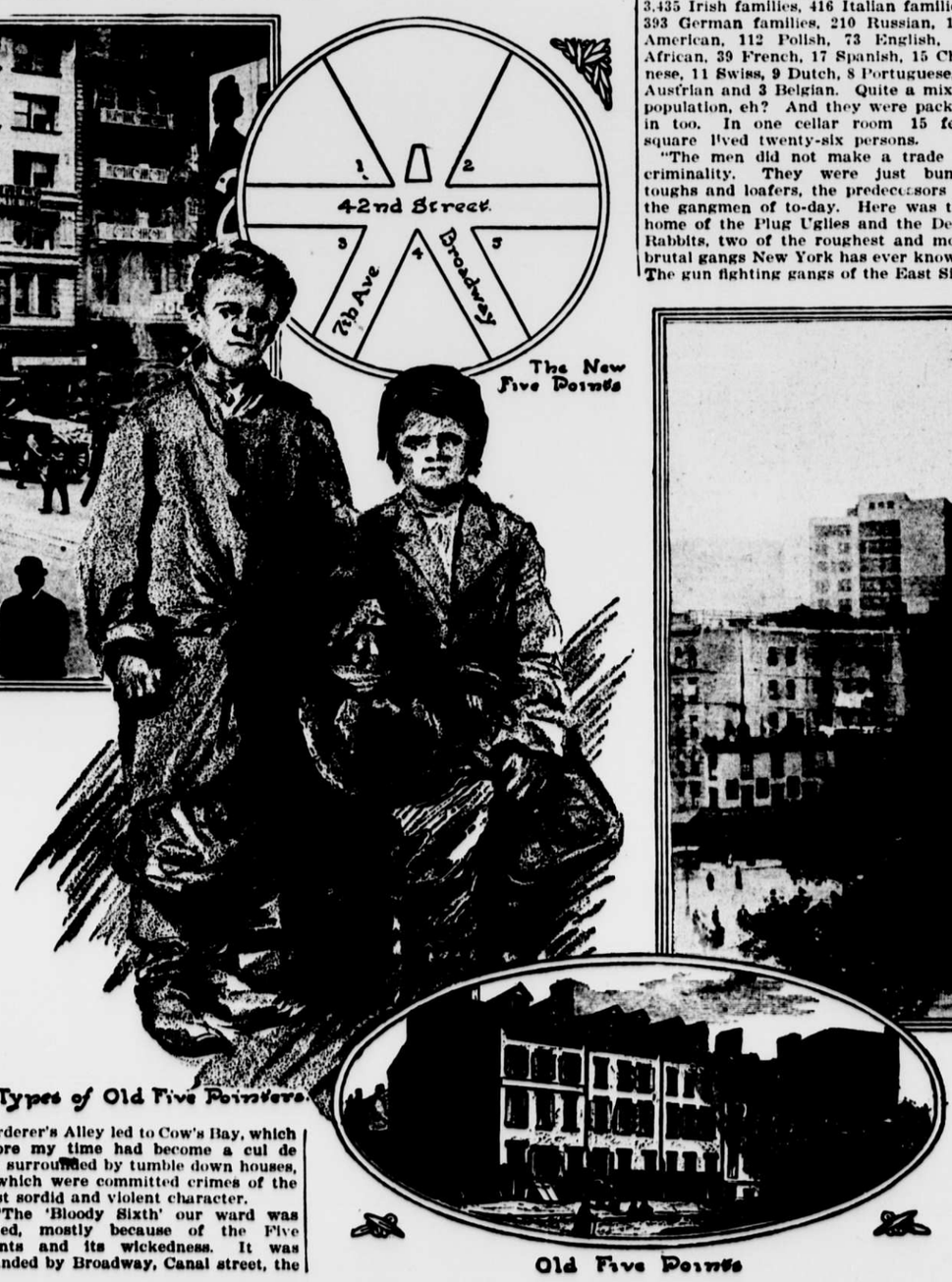
"Take this centre. From Thirty-fourth street to Fiftieth street and from Fifth avenue to Eighth avenue there is not a more brilliantly lighted section in the country—or in the world; and you and I know something of what goes on here under the glare of the electric light—deeds that would not be possible in hidden places or in the dark. Like the old Five Points, it is within a short walk of the fine residential section, Fifth avenue. That it is a crime centre has been known for a long time.

"The crimes of the old Five Points were cruel, vicious, sordid and brutal; here the crimes are cruel, refined and cunning. Brawn was the chief asset of the crook of the old Five Points, while brain is the chief asset of the crook here.

"From an economic standpoint this place is more dangerous than the old one. The evil influence of the old Five Points was not scattered, but was confined to one small area; here victims come from all over the country, to go home—when they do go home—to corrupt the minds and the morals of others who have not had their special education.

"Also, the effect of the old Five Points was confined to the lowest and baser classes, while some of the best blood and brains of the country are attracted to the Great White Way, corrupted, vitiated and sent away again to spread its corruption."

The New Five Points
Forty Second Street, Broadway and Seventh Ave



Types of Old Five Pointsters.

Five Points To-day

Old Five Points